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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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COAST-TO-COAST Summer of Struggle

SMASH RACIST TERROR

SHANTEL DAVIS
we will never forget
Shantel Davis
Alex Flores
Shantel Davis
On June 14th, 2012, 23 year old Shantel was murdered by NYPD. Shantel was a loving and respectable daughter, grand daughter, sister, niece, aunt and friend who loved life and enjoyed her own to the fullest.
Shantel had a smile as bright as day and a warm embrace. Her untimely death has become a rallying call to life for our community: from her ending, there will be a new beginning.
#JusticeforShantelDavis #SayHerName

Kops Are All A Part Of the Kourts KKKlan BO$$E$ PLAN
SMASH RACIST TERROR
FREE JUSTIN!
WITH MULTI RACIAL FIGHT BACK
FREE JUSTIN
SMASH RACIST TERROR

From LA to Brooklyn to Newark, fight racist police terror.

Newark, NJ/Brooklyn, NY, July 12—"You see multiple generations and know this is a sustained and committed Party. This made a strong impression on me," said a young person who joined the 45 Progressive Labor Party (PLP) comrades and friends for a week-long summer project (SP) revolving around fightbacks against racist police terror and decrepit housing conditions. The intention was to strengthen the relationship between PL'ers and the working class in the fight against capitalism. Case in point: The family of Alex Flores (murdered by Los Angeles kkkops) showed solidarity with the targets of police terror here.

Workers from California, Chicago, New York, New Jersey, and Colombia kicked off the SP with a barbecue at one comrade's house that included both socializing and strategizing for fight-backs that would take place throughout the SP. The week's activities included leaflet writing, study groups, CHALLENGE sales and discussions, a walking tour, protests, marches, and beach time (see letters from participants, page 3). One strength was evident—all events centered around mass antiracist struggles PLP is embedded in, confirming how we are indeed a fighting organization. The main weakness was evident as well; we need to invite a broader base of students and workers.

We will never forget
Shantel, Kyam, Alex

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JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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SCAN ME

OUR FIGHT

✯Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

✯The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

✯Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

✯While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

✯Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

✯Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

✯Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

✯Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✯Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

✯Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Reject all imperialists

U.S. empire in rapid decline while rivals rise

The U.S. is an imperialist superpower in steep decline. A recent case in point: At the G20, a conference of the world's largest economies, the Big Fascist liberals—the multinational banks and energy companies that control the Democratic Party—utterly failed in their attempts to isolate rival imperialist Russia. From the New York Times (7/8): "[I]n a reflection of why Russia's economy continues to function, [Russian Foreign Minister Sergey] Lavrov did meet directly with…major nations that have declined to join the Western-led coalition against his country."

As the U.S.-European alliance behind Ukraine seems exhausted, Russia has strengthened its economic ties with regional powers from Iran and India to Brazil and Mexico. Imperialist China, the greatest threat to U.S. dominance, dismissed an appeal from Secretary of State Antony Blinken to join the anti-Russia coalition. U.S. sanctions be damned, Russia is raking in record revenues from fossil fuels (NYT, 6/13). (The ruble is up nearly 30 percent against the U.S. dollar this year.) All the while, millions of workers worldwide are starved and impoverished by droughts, floods, and an inflationary spiral with no end in sight.

Despite unequaled wealth and the world's largest armed forces, the U.S. seems powerless to stop the Chinese imperialists from expanding their economic influence. Despite billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine, it can't stop Russia from grabbing more territory. As diplomacy and threats fail, the bosses will settle their disagreements with bullets and bombs. Regardless of who wins, workers will pay the price with their blood. It is up to the working class of the world to turn this imperialist war into class war for communism–workers' power.

U.S. rulers' split points to fascism

To fight off a life-and-death challenge from the Small Fascists, the gutter racists and sexists who control the Republican Party and the U.S. Supreme Court [see Glossary, p. 6], the Big Fascists of finance capital can't keep running things in the old way. Liberal democracy—the lipstick on the pig of capitalist dictatorship—never served the interests of the working class. Now it's not even working for the liberal bosses. Full-blown fascism—with wholesale state terror—is on the horizon. It's the only way for the liberals to stop the Small Fascists. It's the only way they'll be able to enlist workers into the U.S. military, facing its worst recruiting crisis since the draft ended in 1973 (foxnews.com, 7/6). The U.S. bosses know they'll need that military to fight, sooner than later. In China and Russia, without the constraints of liberal democracy, the rulers are more unified, more efficient fascists at this stage of the game. They have a head start toward World War III.

The world's rising instability is a great danger for the international working class—but also a huge opportunity to smash the profit system once and for all. Workers are enraged by the capitalist status quo, as attested by the thousands in Sri Lanka who stormed their war criminal president's residence. Their fury and courage are unquestioned—but to change the world, they need communist leadership.

Progressive Labor Party is small today. So were the Bolsheviks before World War I and the Chinese communists before World War II. Like them, we have the potential to grow quickly. Our historic task is to organize millions to turn the next world war into communist revolution.

Europe: U.S. friends in shambles

In February, at the start of the current conflict in Ukraine, the U.S. bosses trumpeted the rebirth of NATO and the unity of the West. Five months later, their most important partners are in turmoil. Small Fascist parties are surging throughout Europe. In June, French President Emmanuel Macron lost his parliamentary majority—due mainly to the breakout success of the National Rally, the gang of nazis that opposes the war in Ukraine (Politico, 6/22). In Italy, the government collapsed when the anti-Ukraine war Five Star Party withdrew its support (Guardian, 7/14). In Britain, the war effort's staunchest backer, Prime Minister Boris Johnson resigned in a sea of scandal.

All the while, Russia has been paying for the war with profits from gas and oil sales to the United States' most trusted partners. As the New York Times noted (7/12), "Ukraine's steadfast NATO allies are tired. This war has already contributed to a huge spike in natural gas, gasoline and food prices in Europe — and if it drags into the winter, many families in the European Union (E.U.) may have to choose between heating and eating." In Germany, the EU's alpha dog, whole industries could collapse if Russia cuts natural gas exports (businessinsider.com, 7/4).

As economies in Europe go from bad to worse, the competition between capitalist factions will intensify. Both sides are disasters for our class. But it's the liberal misleaders—with their track record for mass slaughter and their strategy to pacify militant fightback—who are the main danger. They're the express train to fascism. Workers have but two real choices: to fight in the bosses' next global war for profit, or to join the historic struggle for communist revolution.

U.S. runs into a BRICS wall

Since Richard Nixon went to China 50 years ago, the U.S. ruling class has played Russia, China, and India against one another. But today, in the face of U.S. weakness, these longtime adversaries are growing closer. India needs cheap fuel for its growing economy and huge population; since the Ukraine war began, it has spent five times as much on Russian oil as in all of 2021 (Forbes, 7/13). China, whose own economy is in a nosedive, flouts U.S. sanctions by buying record amounts of Russian crude (oilprice.com, 7/6).

Now the alliance known as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is expanding, with Iran and Argentina set to join in 2023. In May, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Egypt, Indonesia, and Nigeria attended the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting for the first time (The Diplomat, 7/13). As capitalism in crisis heads toward world war, it is impossible to predict how these countries will align. But what seems certain is that the situation is volatile—and is heading toward a boiling point.

The new Russia-Iran axis

Besides enriching Moscow's treasury, the United States' moves to punish Russia have backfired by uniting two of its arch-enemies, Russia and Iran. The Big Fascists hoped to delay Iran's development of nuclear weapons by reviving the nuclear deal engineered by Barack Obama—until Russia torpedoed the strategy by persuading Iran to insist on a lifting of sanctions against Russia (NYT, 7/14). On July 19, Vladimir Putin met with Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's top leader, who proclaimed that Russia was justified in invading Ukraine. According to a Kremlin spokesman, a "strategic cooperation" treaty with Iran is on the table (NYT, 7/19). U.S. bosses' immediate fear is that Iran will sell Russia state-of-the-art battlefield drones, which could tip the balance in artillery warfare in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russia and India are pursuing a land-and-sea trade route through Iran, avoiding Europe and any potential obstructions. It's a big boost for Russia, and a sign that Iran is open to new transnational commerce—independent of the U.S. dollar—that would render U.S. sanctions almost useless (Bloomberg, 7/14).

The only solution

As the U.S. empire falters, China and Russia are growing bolder in challenging the U.S. bosses' dominance. All of these imperialist powers spell death and destruction for the international working class. All of them use the rotten ideas of nationalism and patriotism to try to deceive us into killing our class sisters and brothers.

This deadly equation won't change by removing Putin or electing a new U.S. president or threatening the Chinese bosses. Reforms can't stop the capitalist rulers' from slaughtering millions in their ruthless drive for maximum profits. Only a mass communist movement can turn the guns against the bosses and end inter-imperialist war for good. Fight for communism! Join Progressive Labor Party! ✪

Summer Project

‘Committed to fighting this racist system’

Continued from page 1

This summer project centered around two major events: 1) a march in protest of the murder of Shantel Davis by police detective Phil Atkins in 2012 and 2) the imprisonment of Justin Rodwell and the legal attacks on him and his brothers for resisting police terror. These two struggles encapsulated what the party is all about and were an opportunity to demonstrate our politics in practice to everyone at the SP.

The march was a powerful experience; it connected the murder of Kyam Livingston to Alex Flores (LA) to Shantel Davis. Families of all three spoke about losing their loved ones is something no one should ever have to experience. But under capitalism these racist killings are the order of the day. We took the streets! It was a show of resistance against the bosses and their enforcers and also an unapologetic expression of the party’s politics. Many gave speeches about how we need to unite to fight this capitalist system that creates these police who kill us. This had a profound effect not only on the PL’ers and friends present but also on the workers who marched, chanted, and raised their fists with us.

Smash racist housing conditions

The SP also centered around the housing struggle in Newark, NJ. In multiracial groups, we trekked to Stephen Crane Village where for the past two years, a comrade who resides there is trying to organize neighbors against the inhumane conditions and privatization of the complex. PL’ers went door to door to show residents CHALLENGE and invite to a PL-authored skit in the courtyard.

The skit addressed the issues surrounding public housing such as rent increases, vermin, cynicism, and the importance of organizing—all with a dose of humour. At the performance, one resident recognized the comrade and was enthusiastic about growing this struggle.

Courts & cops, all part of bosses’ plan

The SP culminated with a discussion on why nationalism is always the enemy. We identified how nationalism and revisionism disguises itself as radicalism, but is really reactionary and how it destoyed revolutionary states like China and working class movements around the world. We also identified present day examples of nationalism: whether it takes the form of reformist Black mayors like Ras Baraka who promotes voting as the solution to ending racism, but uses his state police force to terrorize Black workers, or fake-revolutionary, revisionist groups who call for multicultural capitalism that ultimately would keep capitalists of all identities on top and workers on the bottom.

With all this in mind PLP held a protest at the Essex County Courthouse with Justin Rodwell’s family on the day of his latest court hearing. Justin continues to languish in jail more than a year after he and his brothers were attacked by Newark Police. During the hearing the fascist judge noticed our numbers and threatened us to keep silent, but when PL’ers held our fists up in solidarity with an imprisoned worker, Justin put up his fist in response. Later his family told us how they were now even more committed to fighting back against this racist, fascist system.

Confidence in our potential

This project provided us with some assignments for the future, inspiring all those involved. Next year, we need to sharpen the struggle with students and workers around us to participate in these events. After a comrade spoke to a student about the Shantel Davis march, the student said, “I really wish I took care of my chores on Friday so I could have been there.”

We are already making plans for a recap for all of our friends who weren’t able to make it. PLP has a strong potential for growth. At our closing event, one participant joined!

Another comrade spoke about writing a pamphlet. As they looked around at the other comrades working with him he said, “You’re not alone. Something about being in this space that makes it feel possible.”

Despite the attacks on our class, we know that a communist world is possible. This project gave us a small glimpse of that world we want to create through the power of collectivity. ✪

Letters from youth participants

★

This was my first summer project experience with the Progressive Labor Party. I had met several members over the years and joined a study group. It was inspiring to see PLP converge for concentrated class struggle. The party is diverse, grounded and led by the working class, as well as intergenerational. That was obvious to see just from the welcome barbecue.

I read about the police assault against the Rodwell-Spivey family in CHALLENGE, and I met the family after the court case. The police are predators, and they are patrolling workers’ neighborhoods to terrorize and intimidate wholesale just like the slave patrols that are their forebearers.

I volunteered for childcare during the hearing, but I heard from the family and the comrades about the struggle in the courtroom. The judge patronizingly instructed the witnesses in the gallery to respect the hall of criminal injustice and slavery, and in response many comrades raised their fists as a silent protest. Melodramatically the judge put his hand over his heart in response. They use patriotism and nationalism in order to rationalize and hide from their own role as enforcers of the bosses’ dictatorship.

I was glad to be a part of the team, and I was inspired to join the party at the end!

★

During the Summer project, I, along with my comrades, had an important experience in Newark. June 1st marked the one year anniversary of the Rodwell-Spivey family being attacked by the kkkops. Undercover kkkops targeted two of the Rodwell-Spivey brothers claiming they were looking for a Black man wearing a white t-shirt with dreads. On July 12th, a hearing for four of the brothers took place to set a trial date. One of the brothers had been waiting for this trial for a year in jail, rotting away on misdemeanor charges of “resisting arrest.”

Before the hearing, the Progressive Labor Party and Rodwell-Spivey Defense Team held a rally outside of the courthouse. Then we stepped into a building named after Martin Luther King, the same building that ironically locked up Black men. We waited outside of the kkkourtroom for what seemed like hours before a kkkourt guard told us to conduct ourselves well and hold our thoughts and grievances for after the hearing or we would be removed.

As the hearing began I could see the cracks in the system showing themselves through a callous prosecutor and unprepared city attorneys. On a zoom call the prosecutors showed no concern, mixing up the plea bargain dates of 18 months to 3 years. One city attorney needed three more weeks to prepare for the trial. Two chose not to speak on behalf of their clients. One attorney and family friend of the Rodwell-Spivey family pushed for the full body cam footage from the day of the arrest. However, the prosecutor did not send the film nor contacts to retrieve it. As the hearing began to end, the trial was once again pushed back.

After showing no emotion during the hearing the judge flips out, berating the antiracist supporters in the gallery. He tells us that he has treated us with respect and dignity and he expected the same. He grew louder and told us a group before had disrespected him and he would not stand for it. What the capitalist with current authority was referring to was a hearing when PLP, the Rodwell-Spivery family, and friends of the family said “We Miss You Justin.” We left the courtroom silent and with fists up. Outside the doors, we started chanting, “Free Justin.” Within seconds, multiple cops came ready to pounce.

Previously I had only been to a courtroom on a school trip. But this experience was completely different. I’ve learned that there might be fancy language and specific rules to represent capitalist law. However, the people ruling do not have the interest of the working class at heart.

The judge told us to respect his courtroom and to respect him. But how are we supposed to respect people who allow Black men to rot away in prison when they have the power to take them out? How are we supposed to respect the same courts that give kkkops a slap on the wrist when they murder our Black and Latin brothers and sisters? How are we supposed to respect the courts when they are only made to put the working class “in their place?” If we are not receiving justice in the courts, we as workers must shut them down!

★

My takeaway from this year’s summer project was that leadership comes from the entire working class. As someone who has been on many projects, it’s always uplifting and motivating to draw from the experience and knowledge from so many comrades and workers. We collectively organize to achieve goals, get to know each other better, and just have fun. As always, my participation this past week has provided me with a sharpened optimism and energy to build the Party in my area.

★

My first PLP summer project deepened my sense of urgency and pride for the fight for working-class power. Spending several days with PLP members and like-minded folks normalized open discussion of the very particular ways the capitalist system fails us all. There were several educators like myself from across the country dealing with similar things like being scolded for being open with students about having recently tested positive for Covid, being excluded in decisions to implement initiatives and strategies that require extra time and energy but so often get thrown out, and trying to safely navigate discussions about reproductive rights in schools where sex education leaves a lot to the imagination. One educator even lost his job for giving students food and allowing them to enter the building to keep them from the cold before the approved time (See CHALLENGE, 7/20). He got his job back when parents, students and PLP raised enough of a noise to embarrass school bosses for their foolishness.

It was impressive that some teachers invited students! With them, we watched a leader of the NAACP take a nap in a Newark kkkourtroom where Justin Spivey was given additional jail time without any conviction, due to the repeat instance of absentee lawyers and a judge who claimed there was “not much else I can do.”

We heard a healthcare worker discuss single handedly organizing a walkout due to lack of personal protective equipment(PPE).Another PL’er ushered us into their experience of deplorable housing conditions and gentrification, as we knocked on residents doors to invite them to a Party written and performed play about just that! We also witnessed a couple roast each other on the topic of Stalin's militancy sparked from the decision of where a group of us should go for ice cream!

Hearing so many intense struggles told by the people who experienced them as well as participating in a few as a multiracial, multigenerational collective, for me, ate away at the sense of isolation that makes these problems seem unrelated.

★

Sri Lanka: inflamed by crisis, caught in rivalry

Suffering from the worst shortages of gas and fuel, food, and medicine not seen since independence in 1948, workers and students in Sri Lanka rebelled. Many hundreds of thousands joined a protest movement demanding the ouster of the ruling Rajapaksa family. When president Gotabaya Rajapaksa refused to resign, protesters stormed the Presidential palace, occupying the extravagant grounds and chasing him out of the country. Workers even took a swim in the presidential pool.

The new president is now-former prime minister Ranil Wickremesing, whose official residence was burned down after over 100,000 protesters surrounded the mansion (CNN, 7/13). Working class rebellion is a good thing.

This system is getting worse each day. Fighting back is the only way to change it. Long-term victory means going beyond rebellion or demands for different capitalists to be put in power. It requires us to organize to build a communist movement with the outlook of putting the working class in power.

Workers bear the burden of the bosses' crisis

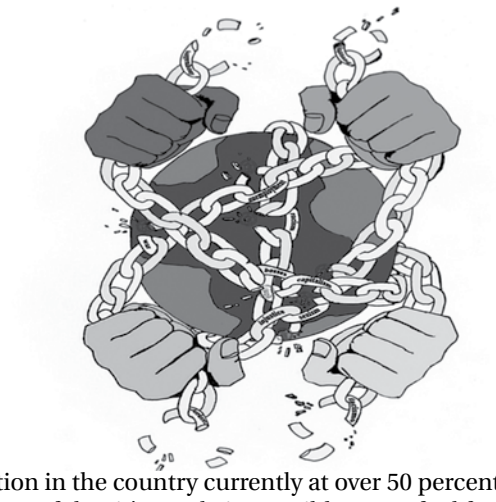
The capitalist crisis in Sri Lanka is a warning sign for the rest of South Asia; The Maldives, Bangladesh, and Pakistan's economies are on the brink. This crisis is exposing the weakness that was hiding under the surface of the world's capitalist economies.

Capitalism has never worked. Even though the capitalists considered Sri Lanka a success story, the working class here has lived in poverty even before the current crisis. In 2020 the per capita income was about $1300/year (ceicdata.com).

The crisis was caused by three main factors. The Sri Lankan bosses have relied on massive borrowing from the big imperialists and used the money they made from tourism to pay off what they owed. The combination of terrorist attacks and the pandemic gutted the tourist industry around the globe and Sri Lanka lost its main source of profits (Washington Post, 7/9).

The second factor was the ravenous profit motive of the Sri Lankan ruling class, dominated by the Rajapaksa family. Just before the pandemic hit, Sri Lanka's short-sighted bosses gave themselves a massive tax cut that increased their profits at the expense of the working class (Washington Post, 7/9).

The third factor is the overall crisis of capitalism that is affecting the working class in every country. The combination of the pandemic and now the U.S.-led sanctions against Russia have set off inflation in the country currently at over 50 percent. On top of that it's nearly impossible to get fuel for cars or cooking and electricity has been severely cut (Reuters, 7/7). The World Food Program reported that 86% of families were either skipping meals, eating less or buying worse foods (NPR, 7/20).



Sri Lanka's importance in inter-imperialist rivalry

The island country is at an important location in the Indian Ocean and equidistant in the east-west maritime corridor; it's at the crossroads of busy shipping routes. Since Sri Lanka's initiation into China's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, it has entangled itself in the regional and global rivalry between Japan, India, the U.S. and China.

In 2017, China took over the strategic port Hambantota in India's backyard (CNBC, 12/13/17). India, the regional imperialist, needs Sri Lanka in its sphere of influence, which is aligned with the U.S.-led liberal order post World War II.

However, China has been expanding its imperialist tentacles via "debt traps" and infrastructure investments. Not only did Sri Lanka built its minimally-used Rajapaksa International Airport from China's loans and started the The Port City project in Colombo, the two countries also share a military relationship. "China's influence…has grown exponentially in the last 15 years as President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and his brother Mahinda…became a dominant force in Sri Lankan politics" (Voa News, 6/10).

So why is China not committing to approve new loans to Sri Lanka right now as the small country is asking for a bailout from the International Monetary Fund? Well, "China appears to be shifting its strategic focus toward Southeast Asia and Africa" (Voa News, 6/10).

All capitalists, big and small, function under the rule of competition. Sri Lanka's economic crisis is an opportunity for India to regain some influence. India provided around $3.5 billion as credit, and shipped fuel, food, and fertilizers recently. "After the initial credit line…both countries in January agreed to jointly operate 61 giant oil tanks…For over 30 years, India has been trying to access the British-era facility which will enable it to store strategic oil reserves" (BBC, 7/19).

At the moment, it seems that the ruling Rajapaksa family is aligned closer to China, and the U.S. news coverage of the rebellion has been largely positive. The movement has drawn countless protesters to the capital of Colombo to demand larger reforms. The dangers of this movement include what the working class of Sri Lanka is intimately familiar with: nationalism and identity politics. While it's unclear which faction of bosses are backing the movement, one thing is certain: short of an international communist revolution that rejects all the bosses—local, regional, and global—the working class in Sri Lanka will become a pawn in the bosses' games as they prepare for larger conflict.

As the global capitalist crisis infects more and more economies, there is only war and fascism headed for our class. Caught in the imperialist crosshairs, Sri Lanka aims to play both sides in an increasingly volatile world order where the working class will pay the ultimate price. While Sri Lankan bosses have tried to "remain neutral" on the war in Europe, this will be harder to do as imperialist contradictions sharpen. The country's desperation for supplies has pushed it to buy oil from Russia. "There is an advantage…if we could buy [discounted] oil directly from [Russia]," said Power and Energy Minister Kanchana Wijesekera (AP, 6/27). This is an illustration of the deterioration of the U.S.-led liberal order (see editorial, page 2). Let's be clear: there is no loyalty among thieves, which is what bosses of all stripes are.

The heroism of the working class is inspiring

The protest movement includes students and workers, including some from less-oppressed sectors of our class. The storming of the presidential palace was inspiring and a lesson that the working class has the potential to not only beat the bosses, but also run a communist world. To achieve something beyond a new set of bosses replacing the old ones requires a movement that is looking to get rid of an entire system. The only way workers in Sri Lanka can escape this imperialist death sentence is to go beyond reformist militancy and fight for communist revolution.✪

MLG: PL'ers expose roots of fascism in liberalism

NEWARK, NJ, July 15—The Marxist Literary Group (MLG) is a group of progressive academics who have met annually for half a century; Progressive Labor Party (PLP) comrades have been regular participants. A hundred members attended this year's week-long conference, whose theme was "Transition." As the rulers who run the imperialist world-system gear up for World War III and unleash their guided missiles on the working class, the Party went in with a much stronger political presence than in the past. We distributed dozens of copies of CHALLENGE and spoke openly about the need for a party to make revolution for a communist world.

Attacking the Big Fascists

Front and center in all our presentations was the connection between liberalism and fascism. A multiracial group of Newark, NJ-based PL'ers involved in combating racist police terror presented a film titled *Copaganda*.

"I'm really nervous!" said the student comrade who was speaking about the role of liberal Big Fascist Mayor, Ras Baraka in enforcing violent police repression in Black neighborhoods. The Big Fascists are represented by the multinational banks and energy companies that control the Democratic Party.

"Hey, you're fine!" "You're doing great!" enthusiastically shouted the audience. For many in attendance, this session was the high point of the entire conference.

In the same panel, another comrade presented a documentary film about the politics and economics of Caribbean tourism. Focusing on the history of the walls set up in Aruba to separate visitors from workers, her talk redirected the whole question of building walls away from anti-Trumpism—an easy target—and located its grounding in the "big money" imperatives of colonialism and imperialism.

In a panel on "The Dialectics of Transition," a comrade argued that the similarity between liberalism and fascism is primary over their difference. What makes fascism and liberalism more similar than different is their political relationship with capitalism itself. Liberal democracy, which has within it the roots of fascism, is a way the bosses cement their class rule.

PLP brings communist politics

Another panelist examined the failed historical transition during the Reconstruction era in the U.S. toward what W.E.B. Du Bois called "abolition democracy." After the Civil War, both northern capitalists and southern plantation owners commonly feared above all else the specter of a racially unified movement of farmers and workers.

A comrade who has written extensively about the USSR shared his most recent research about the relationship between Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin. Unless the prevailing falsehoods surrounding scholarship on Soviet history are refuted, and people understand both the actual achievements and the shortcomings of Soviet socialist construction, the revolutionary "transition" from capitalism to communism will be significantly blocked.

Finally, PLP comrades and friends led a reading group that examined Marxist analyses of the grounding of fascism in capitalism and imperialism. One speaker focused on the mid-1930s debate within the communist movement between the call for social revolution issued by R. Palme Dutt and the advocacy of a popular front by Georgi Dimitrov. History shows that the united front resulted in only fortifying the bosses' system and laid the basis for the corruption of the old communist movement.

Another speaker discussed the Caribbean communist poet Aimé Césaire's dissection of European fascism as a direct result of colonial brutality.

A third speaker examined the writings of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, who ironically observed that democracy "organized fascism when it felt it could no longer resist the pressure of the working class" and no longer hide behind their pretense of democracy.

Gramsci concluded that when the mask of democracy falls off, the ruler's naked brutality is exposed, and the bosses use violence and repression to crush the working class in order to regain control of their system.

Continued on page 5

Part 10: Black communists in Spanish Civil War

Crawford: 'I fought fascism with bullets'

This is part 10 of a series about Black communists in the Spanish Civil War. In the early 1930s the urban bourgeoisie (capitalists) of Spain, supported by most workers and many peasants, overthrew the violent, repressive monarchy to form a republic. In July 1936 the Spanish army, eventually commanded by Francisco Franco, later the fascist dictator, rebelled to reestablish the repressive monarchy. Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy gave Franco massive military aid.

In 1936 the International Communist Movement, called the Comintern, headquartered in the Soviet Union and led by Joseph Stalin, organized volunteers, mainly workers from more than 60 countries into the International Brigades (IBs) to go to Spain to defend the Republic. Black workers, especially Black communists, emphasized the importance of fighting racism to win anything for the working class. And they brought this antiracist fightback with them when they returned to the United States. They were building a movement they hoped would lead to communist revolution around the world. They succeeded in organizing millions around communist ideas and practices. But the movement believed that uniting with liberal bosses to defend the Republic in Spain would further the fight for communism. This was part of the united front against fascism, which resulted in only fortifying the bosses' system and laid the basis for the corruption of the old communist movement.

In the Progressive Labor Party, we are against any unity with capitalists. They all have to go and the working class must rule: that's communism.

If the working class is to seize and hold state power throughout the world, Black workers' leadership is essential. That is the only way our class can destroy racism, the lifeblood of capitalism. The following is a story of one such leader, Crawford Morgan.

Crawford Morgan was born in 1910 in Rockingham, North Carolina. After high school, he became an apprentice printer. He moved first to Norfolk Virginia, then to New York City. During the Depression, he became involved in organizations of the unemployed in New York City and was arrested in a demonstration at the Home Relief Bureau.

Morgan joined the Young Communist League (YCL) in 1932. The YCL was the vibrant youth wing of the Communist Party, which he joined four years later. Despite anticommunist lies in the bosses' media, communism was held in high regard among masses of Black working women, men, and youth.

From 'runner' to driver

Morgan sailed for Spain in March, 1937. He was assigned to the infantry attached to the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (mainly Canadian, but also U.S. volunteers). He was later transferred to the Lincoln-Washington Battalion, serving at brigade headquarters as a communications "runner," radio communication being insecure.

In August 1937, on the Aragon front, Morgan received a leg wound storming the town of Quinto. After recovery, he returned to his unit. But complications from his leg wound led to his becoming a truck driver in the Transport Unit for the remainder of the war.

In World War II, Morgan served in all-Black units in the segregated U.S. Army from 1942 until 1946, including two years in Europe. After the war, he again worked as a truck driver, then as an offset printer.

Defends his role as a communist

In September 1954, Morgan testified on behalf of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB) in hearings before the red-baiting (i.e. anticommunist) Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The committee was seeking to declare the VALB a "subversive organization" – the Abraham Lincoln Brigade was led by communists and at least 80 percent of the Brigade were Communist Party members.

Crawford, pictured on the left, fought fascists in Spain and in the U.S. government. Crawford, pictured on the right with Black communist writer Langston Hughes, sitting left..

Asked why he had fought as a communist in Spain, Morgan had answered:

> *Being a Negro, and all of the stuff that I have had to take in this country, I had a pretty good idea of what fascism was. I got a chance there [in Spain] to fight it with bullets and I went there and fought it with bullets. If I get a chance to fight it with bullets again, I will fight it with bullets again.*

While the U.S. ruling class government exposed itself as the custodians of brutal racist injustice, Morgan publicly displayed his confidence in his role as a communist. He has also used this as a space to denounce the capitalist system (see below).

Morgan died in 1976. In that year an article in The Volunteer, the journal of the VALB, wrote:

> *He served with discipline, dignity and courage. He was liked. He was respected. He was*
>
> *a comrade whose qualities were deep and pervasive … A demonstration of this was given by him as witness for VALB in the prosecution before the late Subversive Activities Control Board (SACB) 1954.*
>
> *[Called as a defense witness, Morgan] was one of the most effective witnesses of that long era of the "Un-American" Inquisition…*
>
> *… under cross-examination [he] remained what he was and what he said flowed directly and lucidly from his life's experiences related simply and without sentimentality. This was anything but easy, especially for a Black man and in the supercharged political lynch-atmosphere of the era. The prosecuting attorneys were young, bright, alert, and prepared ... [he] met and speared their well-planned attacks so cleanly that they hung limp.*
>
> *... [He] was cross-examined on arrests and/or convictions in California. His narration of what it meant to be unemployed, penniless and young in the Great Depression unrolled with such classic and telling simplicity that it became a veritable "J'accuse," the condemnation of his condemners and all they represented.*
>
> *The prosecutors spun out that [he] was fervently opposed to fascism and sought to extract the implication that in taking up arms against fascism he had thus acted against the interests of the U.S. His answer was that, on the contrary, the defense of Republican Spain was the defense of the American people.*
>
> *It became clearer and clearer that the prosecutors were becoming less and less inclined to tangle further with him. In the end, they were glad just to be rid of him. He was too much the exemplary 'premature anti-fascist' for them. He vindicated the Abraham Lincoln Battalion.*

Later on in the early 1970s, Morgan worked with the VALB's Historical Commission to gather information on other Black volunteers.

Crawford Morgan was one of many Black workers who joined the Communist Party to fight against racism and for communism. He took the lead in fighting against fascism in Spain and for internationalism. Today, as then, Black workers' leadership is key to the fight against racism and for communist revolution. J

Sources: The Volunteer, December 1976; Joseph Brandt, Black Americans in the Spanish Civil War Against Fascism; Cullum & Berch, African-Americans in the Spanish Civil War; The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives.✪

PL'ers expose roots of fascism in liberalism

Continued from page 4

Be a communist, not just a Marxist

Many intellectuals who attend the MLG conferences describe themselves as Marxists, but not as communists. This needs to change. The Party builds a base with these graduate students and professors to help them unify theory and practice. We urge them to align themselves with the actual struggles of the working class and join our revolutionary Party. The working class, guided by international antiracist solidarity, is the leading force for revolutionary change. While intellectuals may display many of the weaknesses of bourgeois socialization, historically more than a few have been valuable revolutionary fighters for the working class: Karl Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Claudia Jones—thinkers and fighters all.

Besides, many of the younger members of the MLG are themselves at best precarious workers, facing a jobless future in a university in decline in this perhaps "terminal" crisis of capital. Many professors and graduate students see themselves as workers and are active in their campus unions.

PLP argues that all sectors of the working class must reject liberalism as a way to save workers from the increasingly destructive effects—political, economic, environmental—of capitalist decay. In essence, liberal democracy turns into fascism as the imperialists of the world prepare for world war (see editorial, page 2).

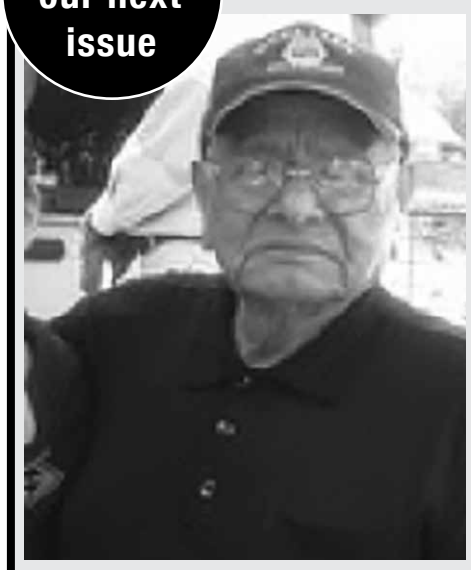
We must fight against developing fascism with a revolutionary communist movement.✪

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

See our next issue

Rest in power, Camacho!



Epifanio Camacho, a militant leader of the farmworkers of California, a loyal member of Progressive Labor Party, and a selfless and principled fighter who made a historic contribution to the international working class, died on July 4. CHALLENGE will celebrate his long life in struggle in our next issue.

Epifanio's funeral will be held at 10:30 a.m. PT Friday, July 22, at Parkview Mortuary, 315 South Lexington Street, Delano, California.

Camacho's legacy will live on

The Delano giant is gone. It is with deep sorrow in my heart that I received the news that one of the Farmworker Leaders from Delano, California died yesterday. Epifanio Camacho dedicated his life to fighting against the injustices of the ranchers to the undocumented farm workers. His non-pacifist struggle found an echo in the immigrants who suffered beatings and mistreatment at the hands of the police and immigration. Such was the importance of this charismatic fighter that his home became known as "The Sanctuary of Immigrants."

Camacho will never die because his legacy will live on forever. There is not enough space to write about the fights he led, the attacks he received and his fascinating life. That is why I only say that from the lands of Sandino, we say goodbye to you with great respect, admiration, deep affection and sadness.

★★★★★

Solidarity needed to smash the sexism

One of the most important issues today is a woman's right to an abortion.In June, the Supreme Court made abortion in the U.S. illegal unless allowed by state law. This decision threw out the 50 year old Roe vs. Wade decision making abortions legal throughout the U.S. Before and since this change in federal law thousands of women and men have been protesting this anti-working class decision.

On Saturday, July 2 a friend and members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) attended a Women's Pro-Choice rally in Easton, Pennsylvania. People were demanding the right to an abortion for women and equal rights for women and men.

We thought less than a hundred people would show up. We were very happy when we saw almost 500 very angry and determined women and men fill the street. Next was a march through the center of Easton ending at another rally. Here several women provided strong leadership. Each spoke loud and sharply. They said that for women's rights and gender equality we must reject the Democratic Party and build an alternative movement.

This rally was the first for our friend. He found this event incredibly eye opening. The rally, to him, was a clear demonstration of the power we wield as a single concentrated movement. It is the exact kind of solidarity that we need to smash the racist, sexist capitalist system forced on us everyday.

Here's where PLP enters the scene. We are the best, only real, alternative to capitalism because we organize and fight for communist revolution. The working class can and will win and build a society based on total equality or egalitarianism.

★★★★★

East Africa: Comrades say only PLP can lead the way

On International Workers Day, while the government carried out its customary brainwashing rallies, we organized a discussion among teachers and students about why workers celebrate May Day and the way forward for building our movement. Our slogan was "Fighting together we can unite the workers of the world, smash borders, and build one world." A teacher made a presentation about why workers celebrate May Day. Our discussion focused on the failure of the government to represent our interests and the betrayal of the trade union leaders to lead the working class to fight back against their bosses' false promises. Here, the unions that represent government workers, like teachers, are formed by the government itself. Government agents operate inside them to keep the unions focused on their own narrow self-interests, so they don't unite with other workers. Also, they offer different wage increases to workers as a weapon to divide and weaken the class struggle. We discussed our way forward—meeting and introducing our ideas to friends in various workplaces. One participant asked when our movement will take over, a question that comes up often in our discussions. It shows that most people here like the idea of communism, but they need the science of dialectical materialism and the Progressive Labor Party to know how to make it a reality.

★★★★★

Haiti: analyzing news with a communist lens

On May 20, the New York Times began a major series on Haiti in an effort to explain why the masses of workers within Haiti are facing such a dire situation. The "exposé" was a revelation to many. It detailed the roots of the poverty that most Haitians have been facing for over two centuries. Our PLP club studied and discussed the articles and wanted to try to figure out why the New York Times, the mouthpiece for the Big Fascist wing of the U.S. ruling class, went to such lengths to put this information—damning both French and U.S. imperialism—out there.

Here is a brief summary of the Times article:

Haiti ended slavery and won independence from France in a bloody battle from 1791-1804. For about 20 years, the new Haitian ruling class, made up of mixed race landowners and Black former military leaders, tried to restore the economy (the richest slave colony producing sugar, coffee, cotton and more) by forcing the former slaves back onto the plantations.

In 1825, the former French slave masters demanded reparations for their lost property—human and otherwise. The French government backed their claims by sending a flotilla of warships into the harbor of Port-au-Prince. The message was clear: "Pay up or be conquered again!" The Haitian bourgeoisie could not fight or pay the ransom—the first time the winners had to pay the losers!—estimated by the Times at $560 million in today's dollars. But the French had a solution: French banks would "loan" the Haitian government the money to pay this now "double debt," taking their cut off the top. Of course, the Haitian ruling class was not saddled with this debt: it was paid completely on the backs of the rural Haitian workers who paid taxes on every pound of agricultural goods that came from their labor.

Then in 1915, under the guise of protecting U.S. citizens and their financial interests in Haiti, the Marines invaded, led by Smedley Butler, the self-proclaimed "racketeer for imperialism." They marched directly into the Haitian national bank and marched out with $500,000 worth of gold bullion, which they put on a ship that moved it directly to the coffers of National City Bank (now Citibank) in New York City. The Marines then began a brutal 19-year occupation of Haiti, making it safe for U.S. financial interests and charging the cost of the occupation to the Haitian government.

The Times ended by asking: what could Haiti have been like today if as much as $120 billion dollars had not been stolen by French and U.S. business interests?

Our club wondered why the Times would publish, in such detail, the inner workings of capitalism and imperialism. How did this serve the interests of the U.S. ruling class (which committed similar crimes around the world, to make the history of Haiti pale in comparison)? Some thought that it was an attempt to win over Black workers and the middle class to the side of the Big Fascists in preparation for the next great imperialist war. Essentially, "See, we did bad things in the past—like an invasion and mass murder and even organizing a coup against a Haitian president (twice), but we can own up to them and now you can trust us."

Others thought that there were greater geopolitical interests at play. The articles appeared on the eve of the so-called Summit of the Americas, where the U.S. was being rebuffed by many of its "allies" in the hemisphere. They thought that the articles were a nod to the global south (Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia) where China, the U.S. bosses' main imperialist rivals, are making huge inroads in investments and military cooperation.

If you have read these articles, please let us know how you analyze the Times' and the ruling class' motives in making this information public.

★★★★★

GLOSSARY

COMMUNIST TERMS

Fascism

Capitalism's response to a crisis of their system, when the bosses can no longer sustain the charade of liberal democracy and resort to more direct control and state terror instead. Fascism is marked by the ruling capitalists disciplining their own ranks to serve the urgent needs of the capitalist state and weather the crisis. To defend their system from internal and external threats, they use all the means available in their state apparatus, including violence. To build unity within their class and loyalty from workers, they rely on nationalist politics and calls for sacrifice. Their strategy is to mislead the working class to kill our working class sisters and brothers in the next inter-imperialist war.

Big Fascists

The Big Fascists are the dominant finance capitalist faction of the U.S. ruling class. They represent the wealthiest and most powerful bosses in the U.S., including multinational banks like Chase and Citibank, multinational oil companies like ExxonMobil, the big automakers, Boeing, Amazon, and the major media companies. As the dominant grouping since World War II, the Big Fascists were the architects of the liberal world order with the U.S. bosses on top. Their dominance rests on U.S. financial and military power and its strategic control of the Middle East and the flow of oil to Europe, Asia, and Africa. To sustain this dominance, they need to rebuild a huge, multiracial military for inter-imperialist war, most likely with China.

Small Fascists

The Small Fascists are a group of domestically oriented U.S. capitalists who are challenging the Big Fascists over the direction of U.S. imperialism. Since their interests are less tied to controlling the flow of oil, they are against heavy taxation to keep troops in the Middle East and in general oppose costly military bases and invasions. They're willing to rely on a smaller, whiter army, backed by nuclear weapons and the Air Force. They use open racism to build a political following.

White & Black workers, unite to fight racism

Continued from page 8

is featured as Bonnie McClure, a mountain woman turned millworker whose close friendship with a Black co-worker sets a model for other white workers at first hesitant to abandon their racist socialization. In *A Sign for Cain*, multiracial relationships are solidified, conjoining the struggles of sharecroppers and millworkers facing intensified state violence in the face of labor militancy.

By no means is multiracial solidarity always portrayed in utopian terms in this body of literature. In *Call Home the Heart*, Burke honestly confronts the intense emotional battle experienced internally by her white protagonist upon being embraced by a Black woman whose husband has just been saved from lynching.

Although the 1935 sequel shows that the two women have become good friends, their bond is clearly the personal fruit of the broader class struggle.

Now as then, it is those inhabiting the "big houses" (and big banks!) who profit from racist division—whether their representatives are the bigger-danger flash liberal smiles and preach "inclusion" (for war) or are the smaller fascist Proud Boy muscle shirts and preach "replacement theory.

It is no accident that almost all the writers associated with the proletarian literary movement of the 1930s and 1940s were communist or pro-communist. Members and friends of Progressive Labor Party—as well as the multiracial crowds of millions who are standing up against racism—have a red legacy of which we are justly proud. The working class fighters are all comrades—not allies—in the struggle for a better antiracist world✪

How racism hurts workers

The following is an excerpt from PL Magazine's (2019. VOL 16. no. 1) feature article, "Black Workers' Leadership: Key Revolutionary Force." Read the full text at plp.org or go directly to www.tinyurl.com/blackworkers-leadership

Racism weakens the working class in two ways. By weaponizing the myth of "race," fostering segregation, and pitting workers one against the other, racism undermines our strength in reform struggles against the capitalists. More damaging still, it blocks the development of revolutionary class consciousness. As Karl Marx wrote in 1867, "Labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself where it is branded in a Black skin." As "Black Workers" [originally published in February 1969] noted a century later: "Racism is the main tool the ruling class has to divide the working class."

Racism reaps super-profits from its victims. It enables the capitalists to pay Black workers and other super-exploited groups significantly less than the prevailing wage for male white workers. Historically, the rulers have used these lower-paid workers—along with the "reserve army" of the unemployed—as a wedge to discourage fightback for better wages and working conditions.

Capitalism is absolutely dependent on racist super-profits, on the one hand, and a divided working class, on the other. To build a mass revolutionary movement, Progressive Labor Party must make anti-racist struggle primary in every political struggle. As "Black Workers" notes, "[T]he special oppression of Black people sharpens the contradictions for the whole population." Racism is both an essential aspect of the profit system and, potentially, its point of greatest vulnerability. Wherever racism runs rampant, all workers lose. Wherever racism is forced to retreat, all workers can advance…

When Black and white workers—with Latin, Muslim, immigrant, and other workers—join in the fight against racism and confront capitalism at its rotten core, they unite at the highest level…

To divide is to conquer. The defeat of the old communist movement and the poison of racism have devastated the white working class…[T]he U.S. labor force participation rate is stuck below 63 percent [in 2016], or about three percentage points less than in 2008, at the height of the Great Recession. Millions of white workers have fallen into alienation, despair, opioid addiction, and suicide.

Their life expectancy is falling. Their millennial children are buried by student debt and earning 20 percent less than their parents at the same age. The profit system has failed them all, at every turn, in every way.

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

U.S. ruling class struggles to rebuild alliance in Middle East

New York Times, 7/16–During his painful encounters with a series of Arab strongmen here in Saudi Arabia this weekend, President Biden kept returning to a single reason for renewing his relationship with American allies who fall on the wrong side of the struggle he often described as a battle between "democracy and autocracy." Mr. Biden is driven by a new concern: That his forced dance with dictators, while distasteful, is the only choice if his larger goal is to contain Russia and outmaneuver China.

Mr. Biden's framing of America's mission as part of a renewed form of superpower competition was revealing. "We will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran," Mr. Biden said…Mr. Biden's effort here to negotiate greater oil production…is driven by the need to make Russia pay a steep price for invading Ukraine. So far, that price has been scant: Not only are the Russians continuing to collect substantial oil and gas revenues, they are even supplying Saudi Arabia, Reuters reported recently, with fuel for its power plants — at discounted prices.

Turmoil in Sri Lanka connected to U.S. – China rivalry

The Diplomat, 6/30–Contrary to popular belief that China has designs for Sri Lanka, it seems that Beijing is unperturbed by India and the U.S. strengthening their hold over Sri Lanka…the Rajapaksa administration…took Chinese aid for granted. There is a widely held belief that Sri Lanka is coveted by all major powers in the world due to its strategic location…There was a belief…that China would come to Sri Lanka's aid during the current economic crisis…Given that Beijing and New Delhi [India] have similar stances regarding Russia, China sees this as an opportunity to ramp up its efforts to improve relations with India.

European Union solidarity devolves into nationalism

Der Spiegel, 7/16–This time, the Germans want to be good Europeans right from the start. "We will help each other with gas supplies," German Economics Minister Robert Habeck asserted on Monday during a visit to the Czech Republic. Habeck had traveled to Prague to prepare a solidarity agreement in case Russia halts gas supplies to the European Union, the absolute worst-case scenario for European energy supplies. The hope is that things will be different between the Europeans this time than they were at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. In March 2020, the German government imposed an export ban on masks, protective clothing, gloves and other medical products. France had already banned the export of protective masks a short time before… if there is a total loss of Russian gas… will Germany still deliver sufficient gas to the Czech Republic, even if its own industry is suffering? "Where was Europe's energy solidarity and energy security when the Germans built Nord Stream 1 against the will of Poland and many others?" asks Joachim Brudziski, a member of the Polish parliament ... "No matter how much fresh Brussels-speak there is about European solidarity, about European energy policy, about the rule of law and European values – in the end, it's always about German or French interests."

Border Patrol has virtually unlimited power over most U.S. workers

Los Angeles Times, 7/17–Most people think of the border as a distant line tracing the outside edge of the United States…The border is officially defined as a zone that extends 100 miles into the interior of the United States from all external boundaries. In that huge area — it encompasses 10 states, such cities as Los Angeles, New York and Chicago, and almost two-thirds of the nation's population — the Border Patrol has expansive, nearly unchecked powers. The Border Patrol isn't stationed at ports of entry and airports, which are manned by Customs and Border Protection's field operations officers. Instead, the Border Patrol polices immigration between crossing points. In the 100-mile border zone, its agents stop cars if they have a "reasonable suspicion" about their occupants. When they set up interior checkpoints, everyone must stop for questioning and inspection. The Border Patrol has not yet begun to deploy its authority on a widespread basis in major cities in the 100-mile border zone. But it could.

White workers not the enemy

Proletarian literature shows multiracial unity

That white workers are hurt by racism is a key principle of communist analysis. The standard liberal rant is that white people—regardless of class—all benefit from "white supremacy." The only basis for white people to engage in antiracist fightback is thus missionary sympathy or guilt; they can be at best "allies" in struggles in which, so to speak, they have "no skin in the game." The reality is much different.

The truth is that all members of the working class worldwide are hurt by the racist super-exploitation and division of Black and nonwhite workers. While workers with darker skin experience greater levels of poverty and state-sponsored violence, many working-class people designated as "white" suffer from low wages, lousy housing, inadequate medical care, unemployment, and hunger. To the extent that racial divisions depress wages for all workers—and keep workers of all skin colors and nationalities from uniting in their shared class interest—the bosses laugh all the way to the bank

Legacy of multiracial unity

But such divisions have also been fought and overcome. In the U.S., there is a rich legacy of white-authored proletarian literature that attests to an often obscured history of militant multiracial unity. The novels of Myra Page—*The Gathering Storm* (1932), *Daughter of the Hills* (1950)—feature white and Black organizers among sharecroppers and miners. Her 1935 novel *Moscow Yankee*—set among unemployed U.S. auto workers finding employment in the early 1930s USSR—features antiracist class consciousness as a key measure of whether or not white workers embrace Soviet-era socialism. That a Black expatriate worker takes the lead in saving a tractor factory from anticommunist sabotage testifies to the integral connection between multiracial unity and communist internationalism.

Especially significant is a cluster of novels–all authored by white working class women–focused on the 1929 textile workers strike in Gastonia, North Carolina: Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike! (1929);* Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread (1932)* and *A Sign for Cain (1935);* Fielding Burke's *Call Home the Heart (1932) and A*

Stone Came Rolling (1935). While ultimately brutally crushed by the arm of the state, the strike taught many lessons: about the key role of women in the class struggle, about the need for multiracial solidarity.

Fictionalized versions of Ella Mae Wiggins—an inspiring singer-songwriter-strike leader who was murdered by bosses' vigilantes—are featured in several novels. According to Vera Buch, a communist organizer, Wiggins was singled out because of her commitment to racial equality (Kristina Horton, *Martyr of Loray Mill: Ella May and the 1929 Textile Workers' Strike in Gastonia, North Carolina, McFarland, 2015*). In *To Make My Bread*, Wiggins

Continued on page 7

Question Mark

By Don West (a pro-communist fighter and writer)

Why . . . ?
The question mark!
Dangerous!
Why . . . ?
Why hunger?

Why poverty?
Why slavery?
Why so few rich people?
Why do those who work less get more?
Why do those who work more get less?
Why so many poor people?

Why . . . ?
Why war when men love peace?
Why must a Georgia plow-boy
go shoot a brown boy
five thousand miles from
the furrow he plows?
Why do corporations make profits
from war,
from the blood shed on battlefields?

The question mark shakes the world!
Sows seeds of rebellion among slaves,
and freedom germs.
Sprouts doubt weeds
in the field of holy war!
Why . . . ?
Why blind obedience?
Why not scrape away scales of
prejudice and see–
See who fastens them there?

West, Don, et al. No Lonesome Road : Selected Prose and Poems, University of Illinois Press, 2004.

CHALLENGE strives to be the communist paper for and by the international working class. We call on all readers, supporters, and comrades to submit class struggle articles, analytical pieces, original photos and graphics, letters, and political cartoons. The next deadline is the **Friday evening of July 29TH.** Send to desafio.challenge@gmail.com. For some guidance and house style rules, please go to www.bit.ly/338ZJow

All submissions are open to collective discussion, struggle, and change. See box on page 2 about fighting for collectivity and against a cult of the individual.

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